



Annual Law Day Job Shadowing Connects Fifth Graders with Careers in the Law

Nebraska Judicial News

May 2009

Special Events Publication of the Nebraska Supreme Court



Alliance: Judge Brian Silverman assists Box Butte County's next judge with her robe for Law Day Job Shadowing Program in Alliance.

Lawyer, judge, court clerk, sheriff, court reporter, drug dog handler.

These are a few of the careers Nebraska fifth graders got hands-on experience with during the annual celebration of Law Day on or near May 1. Sponsored by the Supreme Court and the Nebraska State Bar Foundation, this program with a seven-year history is directed toward encouraging students to work hard and stay in school.

Asked which job was of most interest to them, numerous students said that would be the judge's job. Here is what they had to say about that job and other careers in the law. (Please note that the quotations are stated just as the students wrote them. Spelling has not been corrected.)

Judge

Whitney was impressed by Judge Donna Taylor's demeanor at Job Shadowing in Neligh, saying, "I liked that she was so friendly and she also included us. She put on a skit type thing and let us tell if Jackie Bean (from Jack and the Beanstalk) was guilty or not guilty." Whitney said she thought that learning about the Bill of Rights in school would be essential to becoming a judge.

Being able to "tell people what to do" and getting to "sit in the big chair" were parts of the judge's job that appealed to LaDonna in Judge Alan Brodbeck's court in O'Neill. She said she was surprised to find out that the judge's "desk top is bullet proof."

O'Neill: Judge Alan Brodbeck presides over student mock trial with 5th grade visitors.



Lawyer

Tony, who also shadowed Judge Taylor in Neligh, said he thought it would be "cool" to be a judge. But he said he thought it would also be fun to be a lawyer "because you get to wear a nice suit and carry a suitcase..."

Corinne in Kearney liked the job of lawyer and noticed that it looks "way different from 'Law and Order.'"

Police/Law Enforcement

Brandon from Kimball said he was most interested in the job of the policeman. He followed up by stating that P.E. is one class he has in school that could help him "be in shape to chase down the bad guy."

Dakota from Garden County liked the job of state trooper. He reasoned that "they travel around towns and they will bust you." "I learned a lot from them," he concluded.

Court Reporter

Molly, who shadowed in Judge Silverman's court in Alliance, thought the job of court

reporter was most interesting to her. She said, "I could not believe what her machine looked like. I could not read one word on that paper that she gave us!" Another Alliance student who concurred with Molly stated, "The court

reporter is cool. If I could do something in law, I would do that." They both thought that practicing typing and reading aloud in class would help them prepare for a career as a court reporter.

Interpreter

This year, court interpreters were among the hosts for the community events. A Kimball student said she was fascinated by this job and suggested quite correctly, "In high school you learn different languages and it would help with an intirpiture."

Dispatcher

Visiting the jail in O'Neill was a big hit with the area fifth graders. Following the tour of law enforcement quarters, one student said she thought



Kimball: Students watch drug dog demonstration in front of courthouse while supervised by teachers and State Patrol.

the job of "disbature" was the most interesting to her. An assumed translation is that she was referring to the job of "dispatcher." Her classmates said they were surprised to learn that law enforcement officers will "come to your house if you hang up on a 9-1-1 call."



Nebraska Judicial Branch

On-line at:

www.supremecourt.ne.gov

Oshkosh: Students take their Job Shadowing experience outside with a law enforcement visit and tour.

Juror

While being a juror is not exactly a "job," Angel was nonetheless taken with the role of the juror and the decision-making process. She commented that what caught her attention was "the sticky notes, the part were they jury goes into the room to decide which person won the trial." Other students said they were surprised that "pretty much anyone could be a jury member."

Coordinated locally by clerk magistrates and district court clerks, this year's program involved eight communities and more than a dozen schools.

Serving as local coordinators were:

Alliance – Linda Roberts, Box Butte County Clerk Magistrate

Kearney – Sharon Mauler, Buffalo County

Clerk of the District Court

Kimball – Angie Haun, Kimball County Clerk Magistrate

Neligh – Judge Donna Taylor, Antelope County Court

O'Neill – Midge Clark, Holt County Clerk Magistrate

Oshkosh – Teresa McKeeman, Garden County Clerk of the District Court

Pawnee City – LaRita Weber, Pawnee County Clerk Magistrate

Wilber – Greg Baumann, Saline County Clerk Magistrate

Judges who served as hosts this year were:

Alliance

Judge Brian C. Silverman

Kearney

Judge William T. Wright

Judge Gerald R. Jorgensen

Judge Graten D. Beavers

Kimball

Judge Randin Roland

Neligh

Judge Donna Taylor

O'Neill

Judge Alan L. Brodbeck

Oshkosh

Judge Randin Roland

Judge Derek C. Weimer

Pawnee City

Judge Curtis L. Maschman



Wilber: Donna Zlab, 5th grade teacher at Wilber/Clatonia is judge-for-a-day in photo taken by her students on Law Day.

**Special Events
Publication of the
Nebraska Supreme Court**



Job Shadowing Host/ Coordinator Feedback

Evaluating the Job Shadowing event in Pawnee City, Judge Maschman made this comment: "Fifth grade is an ideal time for children to learn about the legal system and visit (the courthouse.)" Pawnee County Clerk Magistrate LaRita Weber concurred with the judge saying, "It amazes me how receptive the students are to Law Day. They ask very good questions and are well behaved." Weber also rewards the students for their working hard in school by baking them star-shaped sugar cookies and frosting them to look like law-enforcement badges. She says that she has even had some of the students stop her on the street and thank her for the cookies, adding that they would like to have the recipe!

A Teacher's Evaluation of Job Shadowing

Valerie Vincent, Garden County Elementary School, summed up her perspective of the Job Shadowing educational activity in this manner: "The open discussion really helped to answer questions the students had about jobs in law. They enjoyed the movement of 'switching groups' and learning about the different areas of law from the attorney to the trooper." She thanked the numerous volunteers, saying, "It was all very interesting and we appreciate all they do for our community."

It is estimated that, since this program began statewide in 2003, approximately 2,500 fifth graders have interacted up close and personal with legal professionals, thereby learning that TV shows about crime, prosecution, and trials are more entertainment than a real picture of the United States legal system. The Supreme Court and the Bar Foundation express sincere appreciation to the many volunteers who give of their time to connect elementary students with the true American system of justice.

*Photo top
Pawnee City: Judge Curt
Maschman talks with visiting
students.*

*Bottom left
Kearney: Judge Bill Wright
discusses the job of a judge
with Job Shadow participants.*

*Bottom right
Neligh: Judge Donna Taylor
swears in a witness during a
mock trial exercise.*

State Capitol
P.O. Box 98910
Lincoln, NE 68509
Phone: 402-471-3205
Fax: 402-471-2197
E-mail:
janet.bancroft@nebraska.gov

